ADDRESS

TO THE

MEDICAL SOCIETY

OF

STUDENTS AT EDINBURGH,

Upon laying the FOUNDATION of their HALL,

APRIL 21ſt, 1775.

ADDRESS

TO THE

MEDICAL SOCIETY.

GENTLEMEN,

AS this is one of the moſt important and joyful occaſions on which the Medical Society ever aſſembled, it is with pleaſure I endeavour, in compliance with your appointment, to call your attention to the utility of the preſent undertaking, and congratulate you on this auſpicious event. It is not my purpoſe to enlarge on the advantages of our inſtitution, nor to recommend to you a becoming zeal and attention to its intereſt.

intereſt. It would be inſulting you to ſuppoſe that your own experience had not rendered you ſenſible of the many benefits to be derived from it; or that any ſuggeſtions of mine could enlighten or animate you in your duty. I mean only to repreſent the advantages of this undertaking and to ſolicit your attention to the importance of it to ourſelves, to our ſucceſſors, and to the medical art.

The laudable and liberal views of the venerable founders of this inſtitution can never be enough admired; and, let us not fail, on this occaſion, to pay them our tribute of gratitude and applauſe. We know not whether to admire moſt, the noble enthuſiaſm of ſoul, the generous ardour for knowledge, or the ſound judgment and ability which firſt ſuggeſted the plan of this inſtitution. Our predeceſſors perceived that it was not merely the frigid plodding on books, nor the doctrines and precepts of age and authority, nor the little detail of an empirical

empirical practice, that could inſpire that taſte and ſpirit, and give that manly turn to our inquiries, which alone can render ſtudy agreeable, vigorous, and ſucceſsful: They perceived, that it was in ſociety alone, by the mutual communication and reflection of the lights of reaſon and knowledge, that the intellectual as well as the moral powers of man are exalted and perfected. I will venture to appeal to every one's experience, if, in the glow of ſocial debate, he is not conſcious of a vigorous exertion of mind, of an energy of thought, unknown in the ſolitary hour.—To diſcover truth, to detect falſehood, to develop the ſeeds of genius, and to emancipate the mind from the fetters of authority and prejudice, were the grand objects of this inſtitution.

Such were the feelings and reflections of the founders of this ſociety; and the happy effects of it upon their character and conduct have been proved, not only by their own teſtimony and that of their ſucceſſors, but

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of the world. They confeſs that this was the ſcene of their moſt ſolid pleaſure, and of their greateſt improvement; and the eminent figure which many of them have ſince made in their profeſſion ſufficiently juſtifies this aſſertion. Here they learned to reaſon and think for themſelves; here they combated prejudice and error, however ſanctified by antiquity and authority, and (what is not to be omitted) it was here they learned to love and eſteem each other, and to cement the bonds of true friendſhip; a friendſhip ſincere and durable, in as much as it was founded on a virtuous and liberal intercourſe.

Theſe advantages have deſcended through a ſeries of ſucceſſors for near forty years, and have at length devolved upon us. During all this time, one thing was wanting to complete the utility of this eſtabliſhment, and to give it all the advantages of which it was capable. A place of meeting which ſhould be our own property, was long and ardently

ardently wiſhed for, by thoſe who meant well to the ſociety; and a ſcheme for this purpoſe was at length ſet on foot, by * two Gentlemen, who have long adorned it by their uncommon medical and literary accompliſhments †. One of theſe was long the ‡ Father of the ſociety, and, in being the firſt mover of this undertaking, teſtified, in a peculiar manner, his paternal attention. They were ſeconded with liberality and zeal both by preſent and former members; and, with reliance on ſome farther aid, we have now the proſpect of ſeeing their plan accompliſhed. I cannot help here remarking, that moſt of thoſe who have contributed their aſſiſtance to this undertaking, are ſuch as, from their diſtance, or their ſtanding in medicine, could have little hopes of reaping its advantages. I would from this draw an inference both in favour of their cha-

* Dr Duncan, and Dr Goulding.

† Dr Goulding.

‡ This is an appellation given to the ſenior annual Preſident for the time.

racter,

racter, and of the utility of this inſtitution. For, as liberal and generous minds alone are capable of ſuch diſintereſted attachment, ſo ſuch an attachment could be created only by a ſenſe of the uſeful tendency of its object. The happineſs of ſeeing the ſanguine wiſhes of our worthy predeceſſors realized, was reſerved for us; and I hope every one here preſent felicitates himſelf upon ſeeing this day, and in being a member of the Medical Society at ſo auſpicious an aera of its hiſtory.

We have hitherto been indebted to the indulgence of public bodies for a place of meeting, and thoſe of leſs ſagacity or zeal might be diſpoſed to truſt to ſo precarious a tenure. But, not to mention ſeveral known inconveniences that have ariſen from this circumſtance, it is obvious that no aſſociation of men can exiſt without a property in ſome permanent external object, to give them a common intereſt, and prove a bond of union. Even the periſhable property we poſſeſſed could

not be reckoned ſecure, while we had not a ſpot on the ſurface of the earth that we could call our own. However the laudable deſire of improvement might of itſelf inſtigate ſome individuals at all times to continue the inſtitution; it is only by appropriting a piece of ground, and erecting a building, that we can expect to give it perpetuity and ſtability. Formerly, we had nothing to unite us but an empty name, and our exiſtence floated on a breath. It is only ſuch a *palpable* monument as this, that can thoroughly attach and intereſt the mind: It is only in ſuch a ſituation that we can enjoy that independence and ſecurity which alone can give due ardour and ſpirit to our purſuits.

In this undertaking, it is propoſed to furniſh us with a commodious and ſpacious place of meeting, and a repoſitory for our books. Beſides theſe, there will be ſome other apartments, which are intended for the cultivation of ſeveral branches of ſcience ſub-

ſidiary to medicine. The univerſity of Edinburgh will thus enjoy a means of improvement, unknown in any other ſchool of medicine; and, I hope, we may flatter ourſelves, that, as its medical fame has been in ſome degree promoted by this ſociety, ſo this undertaking will tend, not only to ſupport, but to add to its preſent luſtre. While the ſeveral departments of medicine are here filled by gentlemen, who are as remarkable for their candor as for their great ingenuity and extenſive erudition, and who with their doctrines to ſtand or fall by the teſt of reaſon and experience alone; it is of conſequence, not only to canvaſs them with becoming modeſty in debate, but to illuſtrate and confirm them by experiment. Chemiſtry affords an ample field for exerciſe of this kind; and, while one apartment is thus occupied, another is intended as a repoſitory of anatomical preparations, and ſpecimens of natural hiſtory. Thus, by infuſing a ſpirit of inquiry, our laudable attempts to follow the ſteps of our teachers in the inveſtigation of nature, will inſpire

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that attention and alacrity in ſtudy, which alone can give effect to *their* labours, and will co-operate with their endeavours in ſupporting the extenſive and unrivalled fame of this univerſity. Moreover, as there muſt neceſſarily be, at all times, a number of the members of the ſociety diſperſed over the world, who have an opportunity of ſelecting the curioſities of nature and art, we can here afford a place to depoſit ſuch objects. While theſe tend to the uſeful information and amuſement of the ſociety, they will incite other members to the like labours, and will, at the ſame time, ſerve as memorials of the gratitude and attachment of her ſons.

And now, Gentlemen, need I ſay that it is not for the purpoſe of oſtentation and vanity, or to beſtow upon ourſelves an adventitious importance, that this undertaking is going to be carried into execution? Let us conſider it but as a ſecondary means of increaſing our conſequence in the eyes of the world; and let us reflect, that as we are now more

more the objects of public notice, ſo a ſtrict attention to the proper end of the inſtitution is the more indiſpenſible. It is only by inſpiring a taſte for inquiry and ſtudy, by awakening a zeal for our own improvement, and the reputation of the ſociety, that this undertaking can fulfil its intention. It would be preſumptuous in me to pretend to point out to you the conſiderations that ought to animate us in the purſuit of theſe ends; ſince I know, from the character of many of thoſe who now compoſe the ſociety, that, as they are capable of performing the duties of it with ability, ſo they are willing to devote their utmoſt exertions to the advancement of its intereſt and honour. I need not mention to you our improvement in medicine as a lucrative profeſſion, nor the more noble and diſintereſted regard to our own reputation, and the credit and dignity of the ſociety: I hope, alſo, that our inquiries are influenced by the love of truth, and that the more ſublime conſiderations of humanity and duty, awaken the benevolence of our hearts, and animate

animate us in our improvement in the healing art.—But it does not become me to insiſt upon theſe topics; and I will not detain you longer from the enjoyment of that pleaſure, which is the purpoſe of this meeting. Allow me only to expreſs a wiſh, that, as virtue and the generous thirſt of knowledge have prompted to this undertaking, may ſcience, candor, and liberality of ſentiment forever reign within its walls, and diſtinguiſh it to the lateſt ages.

FINIS.

SOME ACCOUNT OF THE MEDICAL SOCIETY of STUDENTS in the UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH.

THE Members of this Society, all of whom are of ſome ſtanding in the ſtudy of phyſic, hold weekly meetings, at which they read, in rotation, diſcourſes on medical ſubjects previouſly aſſigned. But, before any diſcourſe be publicly read, it is communicated in writing to every member, and ſome are appointed to impugn, if neceſſary, the doctrines which it contains.

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From theſe circumſtances, the author of every diſcourſe is induced to take the utmoſt pains to render it as complete as poſſible; and the other members have an opportunity of coming prepared to point out every other view in which the ſubject can be conſidered. Thus, a ſpirited emulation is excited, genius is called forth, the judgment is exerciſed, and the utmoſt induſtry is produced; and, by a mutual communication, much information is obtained, miſtakes are corrected, and farther neceſſary inquiries pointed out.

At theſe meetings, every opinion which has at any time prevailed, or which ſubſiſts, with any credit in the ſyſtem of phyſic, is examined with great freedom. Among others, the doctrines delivered by the profeſſors in the univerſity are conſidered and canvaſſed with modeſty, but without reſerve. By this means, theſe doctrines are more fully underſtood; and, when adopted, are received, not on the mere authority of a profeſſor,

feſſor, but as the reſult of the ſtudent's own deliberation and judgment.

Such an inſtitution may hereafter be of uſe in ſecuring the diligence of profeſſors, and the attention of ſtudents. And it is acknowledged, by all who are acquainted with the univerſity of Edinburgh, that the aſſiduity and ardor in ſtudy, which is ſo remarkable in the greateſt part of the ſtudents of medicine, has been eſpecially excited and ſupported by the medical ſociety; and, in this manner, it has contributed not a little to the proſperity and preſent flouriſhing ſtate of this ſchool of phyſic.

So great have been the advantages derived from this inſtitution, that it has now ſubſiſted without interruption for about forty years. The preſent profeſſors of medicine in the univerſity, and many others of the moſt diſtinguiſhed name in phyſic, have been members of it. All of them have ſhewn themſelves no leſs ready in acknowledging

ledging the benefit they had received from it, than warm in expreſſing the affection they ſtill retain for it; and there is this proof of both, that theſe gentlemen, many of whom are now at a great diſtance, as often as they have had occaſion to adviſe a young man to reſort to this univerſity for the ſtudy of phyſic, have, at the ſame time, directed him to become a member of the medical ſociety, and have employed all their intereſt to obtain his admiſſion, conſidering it as a chief means of his progreſs and improvement.

As this ſociety has been of ſo conſiderable utility, it is unqueſtionably an object of conſequence to remove any inconveniences under which it has hitherto laboured, and to give it all poſſible ſtability and permanence. The members have not hitherto poſſeſſed any convenient place, under their own command, in which their meetings might be held; and while, with great pains and expence, they have acquired a conſiderable li-

brary, they have had no room proper for its reception. At preſent, it is in a ſituation very ill adapted for allowing them to have the proper uſe of their books.

To remove theſe inconveniences, they propoſe to make a building ſuitable to their purpoſes, which is intended to afford them a room for their library; a hall for their weekly meetings; a repoſitory for curious ſubjects in natural hiſtory or anatomy; and a place for chemical experiments. Such a building will give many and great advantages in carrying on the buſineſs of the ſociety. It will enable the members to proſecute their ſtudies with more convenience; it will allow them to engage in inquiries which they could not otherwiſe purſue; and, by farther uniting them in a common property, it will ſecure the permanency of the inſtitution.

For defraying the expence of this building, the preſent members have contributed according

according to their abilities. And they have had this particular approbation of their deſign, that many Gentlemen, long ſince ſettled in diſtant countries, have cheerfully ſubſcribed to the undertaking.

Theſe contributions, though they have enabled the ſociety to begin the work, are by no means ſufficient for compleating it. They have, therefore, publiſhed this account of their ſituation, that Gentlemen, who wiſh well to literary eſtabliſhments, may have an opportunity of encouraging an inſtitution, which has had, and is likely to have, a great ſhare in advancing the reputation of the ſchool of phyſic, which has flouriſhed ſo much to the honour and emolument of the city of Edinburgh.

Contributions, for this purpoſe, are received by DRS CULLEN, HOPE, and DUNCAN, phyſicians in Edinburgh; and theſe Gentlemen, with the annual preſidents of the ſociety, are entruſted with the conduct

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of the building now carrying on. Contributions are alſo received at London, by MR JOHN MURRAY bookſeller, No. 32. Fleet-ſtreet; and at Dublin, by MR T. EWING bookſeller, Capel-ſtreet.

EDINBURGH MAY 21.

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